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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 02965-84
18 May 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
National Intelligence Officer for NESA

SUBJECT: Stopping the Attacks on Gulf Shipping

1. The US is at a potential impasse in facing the present escalation of the Gulf war involving Iranian/Iraqi attacks on oil shipping.

-- It is precisely this type of unchecked air war against tankers that could lead to the lengthy cessation of Gulf oil flow so feared by the West.

2. Iraq as the Culprit? Although we view Iran as the implacable prosecutor of the war, it is, in fact, Iraq which has escalated the present fighting to the point that it threatens international interests. Iraq surpasses Iran in the number of attacks against shipping and is better equipped to do it. Iran's strikes are essentially more defensive, designed to stop Iraqi attacks on their oil production income.

-- The Iranians would be pleased to see this spiral of air attacks cease altogether and the situation return to the status quo. Iran could then continue to pay for its war while Iraq cannot.

3. If the US intervenes militarily to stop air attacks on shipping we will almost certainly have to take on the Iraqis as much as the Iranians. Wherever our sympathies may be, it would be diplomatically untenable to punish Iranian attacks on tankers while permitting Iraqi attacks to continue.

-- Yet to shoot down anybody who attacks shipping is tantamount to supporting the Iranian goal of stopping Iraqi attacks.

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